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## HAPPINESS.

*I. The Revival of Eudaemonism and Hedonism.* 1. Those who like the present writer defend what may, for want of a recognized title, be called a spiritual theory of morals are confronted just now by a revival of Eudaemonism and Hedonism. In the high day of Green's influence men talked as if such views were permanently refuted. It is not so now. My experience as a teacher may be exceptional, but it is noticeable that a considerable number of pupils incline to interpret morality by happiness or by pleasure. While among masters who are quite free from the materialism and naturalism which have so long been associated with self-regarding theories, Mr. McTaggart is noticeable in his adherence to pleasure as a moral criterion.

2. There are certain general causes or influences which will always favor Eudaemonism and Hedonism in this country. Happiness and pleasure are solid things, or at least have an appearance of solidity. They appeal to the self-assertive, hard-headed, slightly cynical English character, which no one would wish to see transformed. They appeal to our scientific spirit by an illusory promise of a *Pou Sto* or definite criterion or scientific explanation of morality; and the promise will always allure till that distant date when everybody will see that the moral consciousness is self-subsistent, self-judged and self-explaining.

But, apart from these general causes, special causes have contributed from time to time to strengthen self-regarding views. Through the 19th century we had the desire for an objective criterion to justify legal and political reform, sensational psychology, and the rush of biological discoveries. The influence of these is past or waning; but now special causes have arisen in their place which may be enumerated as follows:

3. (a) Many of the current "refutations" of Hedonism do not carry the same conviction as of old. Not a few people who dislike Hedonism will yet see this growing incredulity without regret. The refutations are far too ontological. They will not permanently influence any mind which does not think that

we can settle the problems of metaphysic before we need settle the problems of moral philosophy. To this I will recur presently. (II.)

4. (b) There seems to be a conviction, more or less obscurely thought, that the opponents of Hedonism have not done justice to some fundamental characteristics of our personal life. However morality be explained it must be felt by personal minds, and, felt in some particular period of time. It must be in some here and now to the individual soul or it can be nowhere and never. But it is characteristic of the Neo-Hegelian moralist to melt the individual person into society and the individual here-and-now into the everywhere-and-eternity. The "specious present," like sensation and all the lower part of our nature, is mentioned by him only to be explained away. Thus some who see clearly that the specious present is the basis of experience are tempted to connect its moral aspect, which Hegelianism interprets so strangely, with that other aspect which it ignores, the feeling tone of momentary experience. Some such consideration as this influenced, I suppose, Dr. Hodder when he said, "The unit of ethics is, within the limits of a single moment of a single self, the least appreciable welcomeness,"\* i. e. pleasure.

5. (c) But not only is the recoil from the Absolute driving its opponents into Hedonism; the Absolutist himself by a process of self-diremption (if that is the proper term) is recoiling or swinging round into his own antithesis. That is how we must account for the hedonism of Mr. McTaggart. The change may seem odd, but the explanation of it seems to be as follows: The fundamental fact in our moral experience is the difference we feel between moral good and evil. Morality is based upon the moral valuation. Now the objects which are valued are human actions and characters. These each man arranges in scale according to his personal interpretation of the difference between good and evil. On Hegelian views the perfection from which, in principle, we should start is Absolute Perfection, the perfection of the Absolute Spirit. But, then, when we

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\*"Adversaries of the Sceptic," p. 325.

come to details, we find we are deprived of a criterion altogether. For, after all is said and done, no one is acquainted immediately with Absolute Perfection, or can describe it, save in the most empty, formal terms. But some sort of criterion the moralist must have, if he takes morality seriously, which all moralists do not. So recourse is had to something very primitive, such as pleasure; and ethical speculation is back to the days of its infancy. The latest Absolute Idealist shakes hands with the first Utilitarian.

6. Thus the time seems not inappropriate for a critical analysis of the conception of Happiness which lies at the centre of Eudaemonism. Hedonism, as such, lies outside the inquiry. To some moralists, perhaps it might seem that the two inquiries are not to be separated, and that eudaemonism and hedonism are the same thing. I admit that a rigid boundary can not be drawn between them; but still I think that a substantial distinction can be made and that the present tendency of calling every happiness-theory of morals hedonism is to be resisted. For, in the first place, the two are, as a historical fact, not coincident. Aristotle's theory is a kind of eudaemonism, but it is certainly not hedonism. Secondly, even when a moralist tells us that happiness in his doctrine is equivalent to pleasure, we should note that his doctrine gains advantage from the fact that he does use the word happiness. Such is the case with J. S. Mill and Henry Sidgwick. The higher associations connected with happiness gives their ethical doctrine a very different color from that of the Cyrenaics or the cruder French hedonists of the 18th century. But all this needs clearing up so much that I will make it the first point in my analysis.

For the convenience of the reader I will indicate now the main results I hope to reach. (a) Happiness must be distinguished from pleasure or a sum of pleasures; (b) it can neither be an end or aim of moral conduct; (c) nor its usual criterion. (d) It is the normal result of virtuous activity.

*II. Happiness and Pleasure.* 7. The other day in a public discussion I heard a young student lay it down that "Happiness us an elementary feeling which we share with the brutes." Let us start our analysis from this remark which obviously chal-

lenges comment. One of the higher brutes, a dog for example, may be termed happy without much violence to language. But could the term be used of one of the lower animals? Is it good, serious English to call a snail happy? Surely the expression would raise a smile. Used of a pet snail we should detect in the word a quaint overestimation of the creature's consciousness. Happiness, we feel, is not something which we share with the brutes, or, at least, not with all of them.

8. Let us now investigate the grounds of our instinctive dissent from my young disputant's remark. Is it true, as he asserted, that happiness is an elementary feeling? Compared with feelings which are admittedly elementary, happiness shows two striking differences.

Firstly it involves a synopsis or survey. When we study such elementary feelings as warmth, or pressure upon the skin, or toothache, or redness, we see that they are non-synoptic. In experiencing them we feel that we are "close up" to them. On the other hand there are others in which we are not "close up," but taking a survey. As such may be mentioned literary vanity, the feeling of having good sport, regret for lost opportunities. Now happiness is a feeling even more synoptic than those last mentioned. A single elementary pleasure, or two simultaneous elementary pleasures will not make a man happy. A young man lounging in an arm-chair before a warm fire, digesting his dinner, might say on the strength of those elementary experiences: "I am feeling remarkably happy;" but it would be only for the sake of an implied jeer at his friend close by who is painfully struggling with Aristotle for an examination. So far from being one separate, definite individual thing, happiness is a sentiment as diffused and all pervasive as sunlight. If survey be thought too reflective a term let us say that it is the general impression resulting from innumerable continuous agreeable experiences.

9. Secondly happiness implies a world of objects—something to be happy about, in common phrase. But what a contrast in this respect to an elementary feeling! Elementary feelings tell us nothing or next to nothing about the objects which cause them. Some of them, such as hunger, may affect

our mind, e. g., make us cross and miserable without our noticing their existence, let alone referring them to an objective cause. A feeling like literary vanity, on the other hand, implies a world of objects to which the agent stands in a definite relation. Still more is this so with happiness. A man who said that he was very happy indeed, but, why, he knew not, would either be suspected of having fallen in love, or at least awaken grave anxiety in the mind of his medical adviser. In some cases, truly, the objective reference is not explicit. We remember the lines in Wordsworth's *Expostulation and Reply*:

One morning thus, by Esthwaite lake,  
When life was sweet, *I knew not why.*

Inspection shows that the poet's happiness was not the mere vital exuberance of the child or the savage, but a deep sentiment based ultimately on a judgment of the quality of the universe and his place in it, which for the time he was content not to analyze but to experience simply in its resultant emotion.

10. Happiness then is not an elementary feeling. And the same reasons prove that it is not an elementary pleasure. For a simple pleasure is merely the pleasure-tone of an elementary feeling, and as non-synoptic and non-objective as the feeling itself. Nor can happiness be a sum or series of simple pleasures. For by adding simple pleasure to simple pleasure you still get no nearer to synopsis and objective reference.

It now becomes plain why only the higher animals can be termed happy, if indeed the term is appropriate even to them. A well-kept house-dog has, or at least is often thought by his friends to have, a continuous system of interests which make him happy. Not merely is he housed, groomed and fed, petted and taken for exercise; he also lives with people who are fond of him and suppose that he reciprocates their affection. But the snail, so far as we can imagine its consciousness, does not live thus. The performance of its simple bodily functions doubtless gives it a round of pleasurable states of consciousness; but that is not enough. For a creature to be happy in the human sense there must, in psychological phrase, be a self which surveys its experiences so that it can call its enjoyments its own. And there must be for it a world of objects to which those

enjoyments are correlative. Many people doubt if these conditions are fulfilled by any creature lower than man.

11. Now let us leave the plane of animal or merely sentient life and consider whether happiness is definable as a sum or series of ordinary human pleasures. I hold that it should not be thus defined and here agree with the majority of moral idealists. But I think that many of the arguments used to support this conclusion are, to put it plainly, quite chimerical. And I will instance two or three of them to show how my point of view differs from theirs:

"Pleasures cannot be summed because they perish as soon as enjoyed." But surely nobody expects to make a sum or collection of enduring pleasures in the way that he makes a collection of postage stamps. It is an old story that no one can both eat his cake and also have it. You cannot have an enduring sum of good dinners; but you can have a series of them which the mind can look back over and survey with satisfaction, as the gluttonous old custom-house superintendent did in the introduction of Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter."

Again: "Pleasures cannot be summed because they are not homogeneous." Why not? At some particular good dinner we may have listened to much brilliant conversation. And the viands and the talk may combine quite naturally in our total remembrance of the meal.

Again: "To attempt to realize a sum of pleasures commits us to the impossible task of realizing an infinite series." But nobody wants to realize an infinite series. The inveterate diner-out wants to live to be 80 and have good teeth and digestion to the last. He is not so foolish as to aspire to eat an infinite number of dinners; 29,200 (or  $36 \times 80$ ) dinners are enough for him.

The short objection to arguments of this type is that they are entirely up in the air, and have no reference to the facts of human life and character. The reason why happiness is not definable as a sum of pleasures is that a mere sum or series of pleasures does not suffice to make man happy.

12. I am not saying that a man cannot aim at achieving the greatest possible sum of pleasures. The ordinary decent citi-

zen never dreams of such a thing; but the attempt is constantly made by people who do not deserve that term. Such people never enter on anything unless they see the prospect of pleasure in it; and never stick to anything longer than it furnishes them with pleasure. Experience, however, shows that it is the rarest possible case for such people to make themselves happy. Even if remorse and satiety can be kept at bay, such conduct, being highly destructive to the social fabric, is universally detested, and the consistent hedonist sinks finally under the execrations of his alienated friends.

13. The fact is that the happy man must not only have objects to be happy about, but these objects must furthermore form a system. In the case of an ordinary man who has been happy for a year, it is inconceivable that he should have been happy for one reason in January, happy for quite another reason in February, and so on. A year-long experience would imply that he went through a steady system of enjoyable experiences due to his being able to satisfy his interest in a system of objects; and the failure of his happiness would be accounted for by the impairment of some vital element or condition of that system, as that his wife became an invalid, or that he had lost a considerable sum of money. The life of the consistent hedonist, as described in the preceding paragraph is the direct negation of such a system.

14. In spite of my deep respect for the ethical genius of J. S. Mill and Henry Sidgwick, I think that their views on the connection of happiness and pleasure are far less philosophical than what we find suggested in so old a book as Aristotle's "Ethics." "By happiness," says Mill, "is intended pleasure and the absence of pain.\*" "By greatest possible happiness," says Sidgwick, "we understand the greatest possible surplus of pleasure over pain."† I do not think that Sidgwick would have adopted this quantitative method of statement, so entirely foreign to any actual experience we have of happiness, except from a mistaken idea of making the idea of it precise and so fit-

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\*"Utilitarianism," p. 10.

†"Methods of Ethics," 6th edition, p. 120.



ting it "for the purpose of scientific discussion." The view we find in Aristotle is that, though happiness requires as its condition material comfort and brings with it a pleasure of its own, it lies essentially in the successful activity of the highest part of the soul. There are grave objections to be made to various points in Aristotle's view, but I think he was right in suggesting that pleasure accompanies a happy life, but is not an ultimate element into which happiness can be resolved.

15. The relation of pleasure to happiness is made clearer by the fact that there are cases, not perhaps numerous, but still very important, where the two are separated. I refer to such cases as those in which men have lived to realize a great idea, not without success, but with constant toil, suffering and partial disappointment. One can imagine the Apostle Paul saying at his death, "My life has been happy," but he would hardly have said, "My life has been pleasant." No doubt Carlyle was thinking of this distinction when he contrasted happiness with blessedness. Pleasure is very important to happiness, but is not the essential thing in it.

*III. Happiness and the End.* 16. To establish the second main contention of my paper that happiness cannot be made an end or aim of conduct, we have only to carry our analysis a stage farther. We have seen that happiness, to put it briefly, is the result of work, using the term "work" in the widest sense. Is this result so definite and substantive that we can make it an end or aim? To this question a great many people, eminent thinkers among them, would answer, Yes. "Try to be happy yourself and to make others happy," is a popular formula for the conduct of life. Let us see if it can be justified.

17. As used with reference to one's own life happiness is for the most part a retrospective term. "I was very happy when I lived in London." It is used less often of the future: "I expect I shall be very happy in London." And still less often of the present: "I am very happy in London." In reference to the future and still more in reference to the present we expect to hear some term less vague than happiness. "I like my work in London very much," and "I expect I shall like my work," are more natural phrases. This points to the fact that

happiness is not so much a substantial result as a general impression. The definite, substantial things in life for me are the interests which claim my energies and time. If this be so, it is evident why the retrospective use of the term is more appropriate. I no longer live in London; my work there, whatever it was, is over. Its interests have dropped into the background; new ones have come in their place. A general impression is what I am most conscious of in looking back over them. In its impressional character the term happiness is very like the term success. Relatively to the outward results achieved I call my London career successful; relatively to its effect on my personal satisfaction I call it happy. But when used of the future and still more of the present the impressional term is needlessly vague. The statement, "I am very happy in London," would only be made to a stranger who could not be expected to know precisely what the speaker's work was and where its interest lay, but would like to know that, whatever it was, he found his satisfaction therein. Spoken to a colleague the phrase, "I am happy in this work," would sound very odd. We should expect to hear, "I like this work." No one who knew the circumstances intimately would ever ask a man if he was happy in the work. If a man likes the work and can do it he is assumed to be happy in it as a matter of course.

18. There is the further difficulty about aiming at happiness that it is got by activities of infinitely various kinds. To illustrate this we may recur to the parallel conception, already mentioned, of "success." It is not uncommon for a man to say, or think, at the beginning of his career that, in any case, he means to be successful. Taken quite literally, this is an absurd resolution. Success in burglary is a totally different thing from success in poetry. What the young man really means is that he will choose some honorable career and apply all his faculties to winning an honorable position in it. It is still less common, for obvious reasons, to hear a young man declare that he means to be happy. But supposing that he did, the resolution would be impossible because of its vagueness. The objection which Aristotle makes to Plato's Ideal Good is relevant

to the happiness-seeker. He is in pursuit of a blank form which leaves him wholly without direction.

19. These considerations lead to the somewhat startling conclusion that no one makes it his direct and primary aim to be happy. I do not mean to say that in conduct there is no reference to happiness; that is a point which will be touched on in the fifth division of my essay. But neither at the time of action, nor afterwards when the agent is thinking his action over, does happiness appear as the end or aim which the action is directed to achieve.

But what of the consistent hedonist? if we may ask. Does he not aim at happiness? I should doubt if he did, speaking with psychological strictness. The philosophic gentleman who was "willing for the purposes of science to devote himself to a life of absolute egoism"\* did not seek happiness, but a series of pleasures. For, as we have seen, happiness is different from pleasure, which, especially in its more immediate and physical forms, can certainly be made an aim of action. It is true that the distinction between happiness and pleasure must not be drawn too sharply. Both are feeling-tone concomitants of the successful exercise of function. But with happiness the feeling-tone is so highly generalized, so purely adjectival to the activities which cause it, that it cannot be made the aim of action.

20. It may be asked: What then is the end of conduct, if it be not pleasure or happiness? This question I cannot do justice to; not because it is insoluble, but because it takes us too far afield. Moreover it assumes that we can speak legitimately of a *Summum Bonum* or Supreme End of life, which I think exceedingly disputable. It implies that all our activities and interests are subordinate to something beyond them; whereas I should argue that they are self-justified. However, if the conception of a Supreme End is still to be used, it should be interpreted as the totality of a man's higher activities, morality, knowledge and art. The pursuit of these organized interests in infinitely various ways by the individual agent would constitute his "end;" and happiness would be his grateful feeling of the end's attainment.

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\*See *Mind*, December, 1901, p. 142.

21. The objections against the possibility of aiming at happiness for one's self hold good in strictness against aiming at the happiness of other people. Their happiness is no less a blank adjective than one's own. But, speaking loosely, we often say that we aim at the happiness of others; and a certain valid sense can be attached to this. We have seen that "happiness," like "chance," is largely a convenient term for covering a field in which details are unknown. "So-and-so is very happy in London"—such a phrase saves us the trouble of specifying what So-and-so's interests are and how far exactly he manages to satisfy them. In speaking of others we can with propriety use vague phrases which would be absurd about ourselves. If I said, "I mean to be happy," some judicious friend would be sure to remark: "You had much better interest yourself in the duties of your station." But the same rebuke could not be made so forcibly to the declaration, "I mean to make my children happy." For I may not know precisely what my children's interests and opportunities are going to be. But if I had that knowledge my friend might fairly say: "I shouldn't waste time over good resolutions. See that the children have a good education." What the father really wants for his children is their moral welfare; this will consist mainly in the pursuit of certain objective interests, which, again, with moderate good fortune, will result in happiness. Every man of true worldly wisdom knows that we cannot "make people happy." We can only give them our love and sympathy, and put them in a way whereby they may make themselves happy.

*IV. Happiness and the Moral Criterion.* 22. The third point of my essay is that happiness is not the usual moral criterion.\* Before proceeding to it let us try for greater definiteness by considering the relation between the aim or end of conduct and the criterion. The essential fact in moral experience; if we were fortunate enough to get a positive knowledge of it, would be at the same time motive, end and criterion of con-

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\*The following sections traverse some of the arguments of Mr. McTaggart's chapter on "The Supreme Good and the Moral Criterion" in his "Studies in Hegelian Cosmology."

duct. Suppose we concluded that some sort of benevolent sentiment was the essence of morality, and that it could be positively known; then of any particular act we could say that benevolent sentiment was its motive, the manifestation of benevolence its aim, and the perfect type of benevolence its criterion. But it might happen that the principle we fix on as the essence of morality is not one which can be positively known. In Mr. McTaggart's view, Perfection is the supreme fact in morals. Perfection, however, cannot be positively known and therefore cannot be used as a criterion. Therefore we must fall back on pleasure. Such a theory illustrates the possible divergence between the end and the criterion.

23. Moral criterion has two ways of application; it may be used to determine the goodness of the agent's will, or the expediency of his action; in other words, it may be a criterion of moral value or of moral expediency. Let us take the two ways in order.

(a). There is one interpretation of the happiness-criterion which is now given up on all hands. No one argues now, as Bentham and James Mill did, that the moral goodness of a man's will is to be measured by the total amount of happiness which he actually causes. It is seen to be the merest pedantry to insist on judging a man by the results of his action instead of by the intrinsic quality of his will.

But there is another sense of the formula which is not so far discredited. Many people hold that a man's will is good according as he aims at the happiness of others. This, I think, is not true; but it will be gathered from the preceding part of this essay that I do not think it violently false. I have said that it is impossible to aim at the happiness of others, if we use strict language. At the same time I should not hold it false to say that men are moral in so far as they are benevolent towards others. The difference between feeling benevolent towards others and aiming at their happiness may in some cases be rather fine; but I think that it is real.

24 (b). Let us pass to moral expediency. In such cases a man is supposed to have chosen the right, but not to be certain what course will give effect to it. It is not a question of a

good will, but of good judgment. To find out which of two or more suggested courses will give the best moral results the man has to embark on a computation of consequences. Now is this usually a computation of happiness? I think not. When, having only two boarding-schools to choose from, a boy's parents decide upon the school where he will learn manliness with a chance of picking up bad language, instead of the one where speech is carefully regulated but snobbishness prevails, they are consulting not the boy's happiness primarily, but his moral welfare; though it may be true that they regard moral welfare as a prime contributory to happiness. The parents do not need to take happiness into account, because they know facts which are more essential, *i. e.*, the character and circumstances of the boy and the probable effect of the school-tone upon them.

25. Where, however, the facts essential to a sound casuistical decision are not fully known we tend more and more to speak of happiness. A man who had made a certain provision in his will which will affect his descendants would probably justify himself by saying that he had acted with a view to their happiness.

Thus it is natural that in questions of political expediency (using expediency in the higher sense) we should speak much more of happiness than of moral welfare. And yet it would be a grave mistake to forget that the aim of political and public action is primarily moral. An advocate of a Sunday Closing Bill may throw his argument into the form that it would increase the happiness of the people. But he usually means that it would improve their moral condition by diminishing the opportunities of temptation.

26. Happiness then may be employed as a criterion; but it is not the usual criterion. And when it is employed, there is always a reference to moral improvement, explicit or latent. It is not a moral act to enhance enjoyment as such. This is true even where the area of enjoyment is very wide, as in the case of the enjoyment of a whole community. No one would take the moral credit to himself for increasing the enjoyment of Sodom and Gomorrah. But as a rule it is assumed that cities are more good than evil; for we believe that societies flour-

ish mainly in virtue of their moral qualities. Thus we approve without hesitation of a man who gives a park to a town. The act evinces, on the one hand, a spirit of appreciative benevolence towards men; and, on the other, by providing opportunities for harmless pleasure, it lightens the burdens of life for men who on the whole are using life well. Our approval does not show that we are using a simple happiness-criterion.

*V. Virtue, Happiness and Individuality.* 27. "But," the eudaemonist reader will exclaim, "where then does happiness come in? You say it is not the end or criterion of morality. Do you mean that it is not an element of the moral life at all?" I reply: "Certainly it is"; and no misunderstanding on the subject could have arisen, but for a prevalence of the ascetic interpretation of morality. As soon as we realize that morality is not in its essence repression and subjection but a positive activity of our nature, we see that enjoyment must accompany it, unless special hindrances intervene. This is the true meaning of the adage that virtue brings happiness. And the enjoyment of moral activity not only colors our view of the fact and heightens our zest for the present; it also influences our plans for the future. There would be no serious inaccuracy in saying that the virtuous man aims at *virtuous* happiness, so long as the main emphasis is kept upon the adjective.

28. And we must remember that our moral activity is an activity of individuals. There is no such thing as morality-in-general; there are only the lives of moral men. Hence the element of self-assertion and individuality in conduct. It is relevant to mention this element here, because I think that the claim to be happy is really in many cases the claim to live one's own life. Not only have we to strive for material goods and resist encroaching forces; we choose the mode in which we are to live the moral life and ourselves enjoy it with a feeling into which no one can directly enter. On the higher planes of life we embrace our mode of moral living (for the modes are many) with a personal affirmation; and however devoted our life may be the devotion is ours alone, and ours alone the sweetness and bitterness of it.

*VI. Summary.* 29. Let us conclude by summarizing the results of the essay. It does not profess to have refuted eudaemonism. No refutation is worth much but that which supplants a bad theory by a better, which I do not profess to have done. But I think that what has been said brings out the main difficulties of eudaemonism.

Hedonism I have not attacked directly. It has a good deal to say for itself on sociological and biological grounds. But it is important that it should not be allowed to strengthen its position by drawing to itself the associations of the honored term Happiness. And, on the other side, it is not fair that eudaemonism should have the support, such as it is, which is given to it under the belief that it is a mere pleasure-theory. The issues are made much plainer by restoring the classical distinction between the two great self-regarding interpretations of morality.

The analysis of the third and fourth divisions of the essay is meant to show that we cannot rest in eudaemonism. Happiness is an infinitely important result of moral conduct and every moralist must take most serious account of it in framing his theory. But if we neither aim at it nor judge by it, it cannot be the essential feature of moral experience. There must be some principle more central; and I have hinted that this is a form of Benevolence.

The fifth division indicates very slightly the true place in moral experience of happiness and of that principal of individuality which is so closely bound up with it.

But whether or not my analysis of happiness be thought successful I am sure that the analytic method is wanted just now. Philosophic discussion is full of uncritical and uncriticised ethical concepts which sceptics seem the most ready to take for granted. It is the business of the analyst to translate them back into the facts which they symbolize and hide from us. Not till the facts are clear before us can we have that constructive work which is so much needed in moral philosophy.

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